



CATAWBA COUNTY

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CATAWBA COUNTY VETERAN AND SUPPORTERS ATTEND OPENING OF NORTH CAROLINA VETERANS PARK

The first state park honoring military veterans from all armed services branches held its grand opening ceremony on July 4, 2011. The North Carolina Veterans Park in Fayetteville includes a visitor's center, gardens, fountains, sculpture and displays. Five Catawba County residents had a "hand" in the park's creation.

In November of 2010, World War II veteran Carmie C. Cook of Catawba County had a mold made of his right hand by artist Diane Hughes. At the same time, molds were made of the hands of four Catawba County supporters of veterans.

At the park's grand opening, Cook was able to see his hand in bronze on a curving wall lining the park. His hand, along with 99 others, one from each North Carolina county, make up the Oath of Service Wall.



Carmie Cook, Catawba County veteran, holds his hand next to a bronze cast of that hand on the Oath of Service Wall at the North Carolina Veterans Park in Fayetteville, NC.

Nearby, on "Community Columns" were molds of those chosen from Catawba County to represent all supporters of veterans: Kerry Penley, grandson of Carmie Cook; Steve Mains, retired Veterans Service Officer for the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs; Dianne Huffman, a veterans supporter and activist; and Cindy S. Travis, Catawba County Veterans Service Officer. The Community Columns are arranged by date of incorporation in the state, which occurred in 1842 for Catawba County.

Cook, Penley, Huffman, and Travis all traveled to Fayetteville for the ceremony.

"It was such an honor being able to be a part of this," said Travis. "The Park is a wonderful reminder of how important our veterans are and what they do for each of us each and every day."

Guest speakers at the ceremony included North Carolina Governor Beverley Perdue; U.S. Senator Kay Hagan; Former State Senator Tony Rand; Tony Chavonne, Mayor of Fayetteville; and Jose D. Riojas, Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security and Preparedness for the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs.

For more information about the North Carolina Veterans Park, located at 300 Bragg Blvd in Fayetteville, visit <http://www.ncveteranspark.org> or contact Cindy Travis, Catawba County Veterans Service Officer 828-465-8255.

"Keeping the Spirit Alive Since 1842!"